

ETHICS STANDARD

Registered Nurses & Nurse Practitioners: Professional Standards

Introduction

The *Registered Nurses & Nurse Practitioners: Professional Standards* establish the levels of performance that RNs and NPs are required to achieve in their practice.

Indicators provide specific criteria for meeting each standard in each of the four main areas of practice: clinical, education, administration and research.¹ Indicators are used to measure the actual performance of an individual RN or NP. The indicators are not written in order of importance, nor are they intended to be an exhaustive list of criteria for each standard.

Standards

STANDARD 1: PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Maintains standards of nursing practice and **professional conduct** determined by BCCNM.

Indicators: Clinical practice

1. Is accountable and takes responsibility for own nursing actions and professional conduct.
2. Functions within own level of **competence**, within the legally recognized **scope of practice** and within all relevant legislation.²

¹ The indicators in the education, administration and research areas describe criteria for meeting the standard in an educator, administrator or research role. If clients are involved during the course of performing these roles, the Indicators in the clinical practice area would also apply.

² Examples of relevant legislation include the Health Professions Act and the regulations under it, and other legislation governing nursing practice, such as the Health Care (Consent) and Care Facility (Admission) Act. Nurses are also required to comply with other federal and provincial legislation that may not be within BCCNM's regulatory mandate, but which may be enforceable by other regulatory bodies, tribunals or the courts.

3. Assesses own practice and undertakes activities to improve practice and meet identified learning goals on an ongoing basis.³
4. Takes action to promote the provision of safe, appropriate and ethical care to **clients**.⁴
5. Advocates for and/or helps to develop policies and practices consistent with the standards of the profession.
6. Maintains own physical, psychological and emotional **fitness to practice**.
7. Maintains current registration.
8. Understands the role of the regulatory body and the relationship of the regulatory body to one's own practice.

Indicators: Education

1. Is accountable and takes responsibility for own nursing actions and professional conduct.
2. Functions within own level of **competence**, within the legally recognized **scope of practice** and within all relevant legislation.²
3. Assesses own practice and undertakes activities to improve practice and meet identified learning goals on an ongoing basis.³
4. Takes action to promote the provision of safe, appropriate and ethical care.⁴
5. Advocates for and/or helps to develop policies, practices and education consistent with the standards of the profession.
6. Maintains own physical, psychological and emotional **fitness to practice**.
7. Maintains current registration.
8. Understands the role of the regulatory body and the relationship of the regulatory body to one's own practice.

Indicators: Administration

1. Is accountable and takes responsibility for own nursing actions and professional conduct.
2. Functions within own level of **competence**, within the legally recognized **scope of practice** and within all relevant legislation.²
3. Assesses own practice and undertakes activities to improve practice and meet identified learning goals on an ongoing basis.³

³ Requires investment of own time, effort and other resources.

⁴ Taking action includes advocacy. Nurses advocate in ways that are consistent with their role and responsibilities. For example, nurses in clinical practice are expected to advocate for their client if the client's perspective is not being considered by another professional involved in their care, but not expected to lobby for legislative change.

4. Takes action to promote the provision of safe, appropriate and ethical care.⁴
5. Advocates for and develops policies and practices consistent with the standards of the profession.
6. Maintains own physical, psychological and emotional **fitness to practice**.
7. Maintains current registration.
8. Understands the role of the regulatory body and the relationship of the regulatory body to one's own practice.

Indicators: Research

1. Is accountable and takes responsibility for own nursing actions and professional conduct.
2. Functions within own level of **competence**, within the legally recognized **scope of practice** and within all relevant legislation.²
3. Assesses own practice and undertakes activities to improve practice and meet identified learning goals on an ongoing basis.³
4. Takes action to promote the provision of safe, appropriate and ethical care. ⁴
5. Advocates for and/or helps to develop policies and practices that support research and the integration of research findings and other **evidence** into client care.
6. Maintains own physical, psychological and emotional **fitness to practice**.
7. Maintains current registration.
8. Understands the role of the regulatory body and the relationship of the regulatory body to one's own practice.

STANDARD 2: KNOWLEDGE-BASED PRACTICE

Consistently applies knowledge, skills and judgment in nursing practice.

Indicators: Clinical practice

1. Bases practice on current **evidence** from **nursing science** and other sciences and humanities.
2. Knows how and where to access information to support the provision of safe, competent and ethical client care.
3. Uses **critical thinking** when collecting and interpreting data, planning, implementing and evaluating nursing care.
4. Collects information on client status from a variety of sources using assessment skills, including observation, communication, physical assessment and a review of pertinent clinical data. ⁵

⁵ Whenever possible, nurses involve clients in assessment, decision-making about client status, care planning, implementation and evaluation.

5. Identifies, analyzes and uses relevant and valid information when making decisions about client status.
6. Communicates client status, using verifiable information, in terminology used in the practice setting.
7. Develops and communicates plans of care that include assessment data, decisions about client status, planned interventions and measurement of client outcomes.
8. Sets client-centred priorities when planning and providing care.
9. Uses **decision support tools** appropriately to assess and make decisions about client status and plan care.
10. Implements the plan of care, evaluates client's response and revises the plan as necessary.
11. Documents timely and appropriate reports of assessments, decisions about client status, plans, interventions and client outcomes.⁶
12. Shares nursing knowledge with clients, colleagues, students and others.
13. Communicates appropriately in interactions with clients, colleagues, students and others.⁷

Indicators: Education

1. Bases education on current **evidence** from **nursing science** and other sciences and humanities.
2. Knows how and where to access information to support the delivery of safe, competent and ethical nursing and health education.
3. Uses **critical thinking** when collecting and interpreting data on learning needs and planning, implementing and evaluating nursing and health education programs.
4. Collects information on individual and group learning needs from a variety of sources.
5. Identifies, analyzes and uses relevant and valid information when planning education.
6. Communicates learning needs of individuals and groups using verifiable information.
7. Uses appropriate processes to plan education that address learning needs and strengths and include evaluation criteria.
8. Sets priorities when planning and providing education.
9. Engages learners using appropriate instructional methods, educational technologies and relevant learning theory.
10. Evaluates attainment of learning objectives using valid and reliable measures, and revises strategies as necessary.
11. Establishes and maintains appropriate education records.

⁶ The timeliness of documentation will vary. When client acuity, complexity and variability is high, more frequent documentation is required than when clients are less acute, less complex and/or less variable.

⁷ Involves applying knowledge and skills related to such things as relationship-building, assertiveness, problem-solving and conflict resolution.

12. Shares nursing knowledge with clients, colleagues, students and others.
13. Uses knowledge about learning and communications to create a professional learning environment.⁸

Indicators: Administration

1. Bases administrative decisions on current **evidence** from **nursing science** and other sciences and humanities.
2. Knows how and where to access information to support the provision of safe, competent and ethical nursing practice and client care.
3. Uses **critical thinking** when collecting and interpreting data to make administrative decisions and planning, implementing and evaluating organizational strategies.
4. Collects information about organizational status from a variety of sources.
5. Identifies, analyzes and uses relevant and valid information when determining organizational problems or status.
6. Communicates organizational problems and status using verifiable information.
7. Plans administrative and other strategies to address organizational problems and strengths with accompanying evaluation criteria.
8. Sets priorities when planning and implementing administrative and other strategies.
9. Implements administrative and other identified strategies appropriately.
10. Evaluates process and/or outcomes of strategies and revises as necessary.
11. Establishes and maintains appropriate systems to manage clinical and administrative information.
12. Shares nursing knowledge with clients, colleagues, students and others.
13. Uses knowledge of organizational behaviour and communication to create an environment in which cooperation, professional growth and mutual respect can flourish.⁷

Indicators: Research

1. Conducts or participates in research to create or refine evidence in the field of **nursing science** and/or other sciences and humanities.
2. Knows how and where to access information to support knowledge development for evidence-informed, safe, competent and ethical nursing practice.
3. Uses **critical thinking** when collecting and interpreting data to plan, conduct and evaluate research.
4. Develops and communicates research questions or hypotheses that are relevant and researchable.
5. Writes research proposals to address stated questions or hypotheses.
6. Collects research information from a variety of sources using valid and reliable data collection instruments and methods.

7. Identifies, analyzes and uses relevant information in conducting research.
8. Conducts research in accordance with accepted research methods and procedures.
9. Analyzes and interprets qualitative and quantitative data.
10. Writes appropriate reports and articles for publication.
11. Uses knowledge of communication to share the practice implications and policy relevance of research in a meaningful way with nurses and others.⁷
12. Shares nursing knowledge with clients, colleagues, students and others.

STANDARD 3: CLIENT-FOCUSED PROVISION OF SERVICE

Provides nursing services and works with others to provide health care services in the best interest of clients.

Indicators: Clinical practice

1. Communicates, **collaborates** and consults with clients and other members of the **health care team** about the client's care.⁸
2. Coordinates client care in a way that facilitates continuity for the client.
3. **Assigns** clients and client care activities to other members of the health care team to meet client care needs.
4. **Delegates** appropriately to other members of the health care team.
5. Provides appropriate regulatory supervision of student activities.
6. Instructs and guides other members of the health care team to meet client care needs.
7. Participates in changes that improve client care and nursing practice.
8. Reports incompetent or impaired practice or unethical conduct to appropriate person or body.
9. Understands and communicates the role of nursing in the health of clients.
10. Assists clients to learn about the health care system and accessing appropriate health care services.

Indicators: Education

1. Communicates, **collaborates** and consults with nurses, students and others about education.
2. Educates students and others about the nurse's role in the coordination of client care.
3. Educates nurses, students and others regarding **assignment** of clients and client care activities to meet client needs.

⁸ Team members may be from more than one practice setting.

4. Educates nurses, students and others regarding appropriate **delegation** of nursing activities to other members of the **health care team**.
5. Educates others about appropriate **regulatory supervision**.
6. Instructs, guides and directs educational staff and students to meet client care needs.
7. Acts to implement changes that improve client care and educational practice.
8. Reports incompetent or impaired practice or unethical conduct to appropriate person or body; educates nurses and students to recognize and report such practices.
9. Understands and communicates the role of nursing in the health of clients.
10. Assists colleagues, students and others to learn about nursing practice and health care services.

Indicators: Administration

1. Communicates, **collaborates** and consults with nurses and other members of the **health care team** about the provision of health care services.
2. Educates others about the nurse's role in the coordination of client care.
3. Develops policies that outline the responsibility and accountability for all involved in the appropriate assignment of clients and client care activities.
4. Develops policies that provide direction for nurses on appropriate **delegation** of nursing activities to other members of the health care team.
5. Develops supporting policies for appropriate regulatory supervision.
6. Guides, directs and seeks feedback from staff and others involved in the planning, delivery and evaluation of health care services as appropriate.
7. Directs and participates in changes to improve client care and administrative practice.
8. Takes appropriate action in situations of incompetent or impaired practice or unethical conduct up to and including reporting to the regulatory body; guides others in reporting such practices.
9. Understands and communicates the role of nursing in the health of clients.
10. Assists clients, colleagues, students and others to learn about nursing practice and health care services.

Indicators: Research

1. Communicates, **collaborates** and consults with nurses and others to plan, conduct and evaluate research.
2. Articulates and supports the translation of knowledge gained from research into policy and practice.
3. Guides and directs members of the research team as appropriate.
4. Participates in changes that promote evidence-based nursing practice.

5. Reports incompetent or impaired practice or unethical conduct to appropriate person or body.
6. Understands and communicates the role of nursing in the health of clients.
7. Assists colleagues, students and others to learn about the influence of research on nursing practice and health care services.

STANDARD 4: ETHICAL PRACTICE

Understands, upholds and promotes the ethical standards of the nursing profession.

Indicators: Clinical practice

1. Makes the client the primary concern in providing nursing care.
2. Provides care in a manner that preserves and protects client dignity.
3. Demonstrates honesty and integrity.
4. Clearly and accurately represents self with respect to name, title and role.
5. Protects client privacy and confidentiality.
6. Recognizes, respects and promotes the client's right to be informed and make informed choices.
7. Promotes and maintains respectful communication in all professional interactions.⁹
8. Treats colleagues, students and other health care workers in a respectful manner.
9. Recognizes and respects the contribution of others on the health care team.
10. Makes equitable decisions about the allocation of resources under one's control based on the needs of clients.¹⁰
11. Identifies the effect of own values, beliefs and experiences in carrying out clinical activities; recognizes potential conflicts and takes action to prevent or resolve.
12. Identifies ethical issues; consults with the appropriate person or body; takes action to resolve and evaluates the effectiveness of actions.
13. Initiates, maintains and terminates nurse-client relationships in an appropriate manner.

Indicators: Education

1. Educates others to learn about ethical practice.
2. Educates others to provide care in a manner that preserves and protects client dignity.
3. Demonstrates honesty and integrity.
4. Clearly and accurately represents self with respect to name, title and role.

⁹ This includes interactions with clients, colleagues, students and others. It includes appropriate recognition of power differentials.

¹⁰ The term "resources" is used broadly and includes the nurse's time and skills as well as equipment and supplies.

5. Educates others to protect client privacy and confidentiality.
6. Educates others to recognize, respect and promote the client's right to be informed and make informed choices.
7. Promotes and maintains respectful communication in all professional interactions; educates others to do the same.⁹
8. Treats colleagues, students and other health care workers in a respectful manner; educates others about respectful communication and ways to effect positive behaviour change in the workplace.
9. Recognizes and respects the contribution of others on the health care team.
10. Makes equitable decisions about the allocation of resources under one's control based on the needs of learners.¹⁰
11. Identifies the effect of own values, beliefs and experiences in carrying out educational activities; recognizes potential conflicts and takes actions to prevent or resolve.
12. Assists others in identifying ethical issues; consults with the appropriate person or body; takes action to prevent or resolve and evaluates the effectiveness of actions.
13. Implements educational activities that support the initiation, maintenance and termination of nurse-client relationships in an appropriate manner.

Indicators: Administration

1. Actively supports the creation of a practice environment that enables nurses to meet their ethical obligations.
2. Guides nurses and others in providing care in a manner that preserves and protects client dignity.
3. Demonstrates honesty and integrity.
4. Clearly and accurately represents self with respect to name, title and role.
5. Protects client privacy and confidentiality.
6. Creates a practice environment that supports the client's right to be informed and make informed choices.
7. Promotes and maintains respectful communication in all professional interactions; guides others to do the same.⁹
8. Treats colleagues, students and other health care workers in a respectful manner; addresses concerns related to disrespectful behaviour in the workplace.¹¹
9. Recognizes and respects the contribution of others on the health care team.
10. Makes equitable decisions about the allocation of resources under one's control based on the needs of clients.¹⁰

¹¹ Includes bullying, harassment and inappropriate use of power.

11. Identifies the effect of own values, beliefs and experiences in carrying out administrative activities; recognizes potential conflicts and takes actions to prevent or resolve.
12. Supports the establishment of mechanisms that assist nurses in recognizing and resolving ethical issues.
13. Guides nurses to initiate, maintain and terminate nurse-client relationships in an appropriate manner.

Indicators: Research

1. Advocates for and participates in processes that promote ethical and accountable research practices.
2. Ensures ethical guidelines are followed to protect research participants.
3. Demonstrates honesty and integrity.
4. Clearly and accurately represents self with respect to name, title and role.
5. Protects client privacy and confidentiality.
6. Ensures clients have the information necessary to make informed choices about their participation in research.
7. Promotes and maintains respectful communication in all professional interactions.⁹
8. Treats colleagues, students and other health care workers in a respectful manner.
9. Recognizes and respects the contribution of others on the research and health care teams.
10. Identifies the effect of own values, beliefs and experiences in carrying out research activities; recognizes potential conflicts and takes actions to prevent or resolve.
11. Identifies ethical issues; consults with the appropriate person or body; takes action to resolve and evaluates the effectiveness of actions.
12. Initiates, maintains and terminates nurse-client relationships in an appropriate manner.

Glossary

Assignment: allocation of clients or client care activities among care providers in order to meet client care needs. Assignment occurs when the required care falls within the employing agency's policies and role descriptions and within the regulated health care provider's scope of practice. Assignment to unregulated care providers occurs when the required care falls within the employing agency's policies and role description.

Client: individual, family, group, population or entire community that requires nursing expertise. In some clinical settings, the client may be referred to as a patient or resident. In research, the client may be referred to as a participant.

Collaboration: joint communication and decision-making process with the expressed goal of working together toward identified outcomes while respecting the unique qualities and abilities of each member of the group or team.

Competence: integration and application of knowledge, skills and judgment required for safe and appropriate performance in an individual's practice.

Critical thinking: purposeful, disciplined and systematic process of continual questioning, logical reasoning and reflecting through the use of interpretation, inference, analysis, synthesis and evaluation to achieve a desired outcome.

Decision support tools: evidence-based documents used by registered nurses to guide the assessment, diagnosis and treatment of client-specific problems.

Delegation: process by which a nurse may authorize an activity to be performed by an unregulated care provider who does not otherwise have authority to perform the activity.

Evidence: data derived from various sources including research, national guidelines, policies, consensus statements, expert opinion and quality improvement.

Fitness to practice: qualities and capabilities of an individual relevant to their capacity to practise as a nurse, including, but not limited to, any cognitive, physical, psychological or emotional condition, or a dependence on alcohol or drugs, that impairs their ability to practise nursing.

Health care team: clients, health care professionals, unregulated care providers, students and others who may be involved in providing care.

Indicator: illustration of how a standard is applied and met. Indicators provide specific criteria that are used, when applicable, to measure the actual performance of an individual RN or NP.

Nursing science: knowledge (e.g., concepts, constructs, principles, theories) of nursing derived from systematic observation, study and research.

Professional conduct: Behaviour consistent with actions that uphold the profession. This includes, but is not limited to, practising in accordance with BCCNM's Standards of Practice.

Scope of practice: activities RNs and NPs are educated and authorized to perform as set out in the Nurses and Midwives Regulation under the Health Professions and Occupations Act and complemented by standards, limits and conditions established by BCCNM.

Standard: expected and achievable level of performance against which actual performance can be compared. It is the minimum level of acceptable performance.

Revision history

Version #	Approved by board	Bylaw in-force	Description
1.0	March 1, 2026	April 1, 2026	Initial publication

Effective April 1, 2026, this ethics standard, and any amendments to it, is made a bylaw under the authority of the *Health Professions and Occupations Act, B.C.*

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